



KEYSTONE CONNECTIONS

From the Desk of Steve Farmer

Greetings! I hope you all had a good long weekend. I sure did, but I must wonder what in the world is going on?! At this writing, it's Monday morning, May 11, 2020 and it's 40 degrees!! On Friday and Saturday, it actually snowed!! From what I am seeing on my weather app, it's slated to hit 78 degrees on Saturday.... Whatever... ☺

Last week, I had meetings with several board members to discuss various things related to the Programs of WPSD. They continue to be impressed with all we have been doing in ensuring our organization is moving forward operationally and educationally. I have bragged to them about all of your exceptional work. The biggest topic of discussion continues to be about the budget. Given the uncertainties in today's world, we are exploring our options. It is hoped that we will finalize our budget by mid-June. I am continuing to talk with our legislators to get updates on the state's economic issues and plans for the new Fiscal Year. Basically, the current message is the same as a few weeks ago: Nobody knows. I will keep you posted.

This week, we will discuss "end of the year," summer, and upcoming school year plans. While we know that summer camps are cancelled, we know we will continue with online learning for ESY. We will update you on the other events as we review information closer to the time and make decisions.

In case you haven't checked, we have only 5 more weeks of school left (including this week)! We have two more "short weeks." Hang in there - you are doing a good job. Let's finish the school year STRONG!

If you are wanting a good book to read, I recommend "Atomic Changes: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results" by James Clear. My oldest daughter, Emily, gave me a copy for Christmas. That was one of the best self-help books I have ever read!

Before I close, I was finally given permission by Emily to make this announcement public: I am gonna be a Grandpa in November! ☺ Heather and I can hardly wait! I foresee many flights to and from Charlotte, NC starting in November and continuing until whenever...

Stay healthy. Remember - I am only an email, zoom, and/or VP away!

---Steve

Notes from Scranton

I hope everyone had a relaxing Mother's Day weekend. It was snowy but it didn't stick around very long. I had the opportunity to order food from couple of local restaurants and enjoy them with family and I was even able to get in a round of golf. This was my first meaningful trip outside of the house with the exception of food runs and running to SSDHHC.

Last week our gym teacher, Mr. Mantz, revealed the winner of his Jumping Jack challenge (Dean Pettinato). This week I participated in Mr. Mantz's squat challenge due to his strong encouragement. Have fun watching. I would guess that Mr. Pettinato takes the prize again this week since he is a Cross Fit master. Also, last week I, along with Mr. Vitale, had the opportunity to provide breakfast to our postal workers in Clarks Summit in appreciation for all they do for our community. They were very appreciative. Last Thursday evening, Ms. Bailey hosted a workshop for parents at all sites (Edinboro, Hershey, Pittsburgh, Scranton) using Zoom. She did a fantastic job!

Thanks to everyone who responded to the survey for staff wellness. The committee met last week and is developing a set of activities/programs based on these. Watch your emails for more announcements from them. A huge thank you again to Ms. Bailey, Mr. Mantz, Ms. Bartholow, and Ms. Abraham for spearheading this effort!

Although we are stuck at home, planning continues for our end of the year awards activity, graduation, 8th grade promotion, and kindergarten graduation. We look forward to them. These events will have a 'necessity is the mother of invention' element. We will be adding many new ideas and innovations and we know you will enjoy them.

Last but not least, I appreciate everyone's perseverance in providing virtual instruction to our students, maintaining our facilities and awaiting everyone's return. Thanks for all you are doing. You're doing great work.

Have a great week!

---Kevin McDonough

From the CECO's Corner

I hope you all appreciated Staff Appreciation Week as much as I did - and as much as I appreciate all of you and the Programs of WPSD! On Thursday morning I saw a boy on "Good Morning America" in their "Good Morning Sunshine" segment - he had beaten cancer with the help of healthcare providers, and used his "Make a Wish" money to help those same healthcare providers now! It's always good to see good news. SSDHHC had its own good news day on Monday, sharing some breakfast from the local Sunrise Cafe with the essential Postal Workers of Clarks Summit! They are also doing great with virtual after school activities - we know our students love more interaction!

Probably as most of you, last week was full of online activities - I know many of you are neck-deep in online teaching and connecting - mine were not classes, but Zoom and Google meetings for things like COVID19 and Strategic Planning, and working on a replacement for East Catholic for our students who are partially mainstreamed. In addition the Deans and I discussed quite a bit about scheduling staff to make plans for cleaning the residence (the tasks they typically do on their very last two days of work before summer.) Residential staff have been contacting their Personal Care Group students/families to check on them, and offer support, as well.

Interpreting has been humming along, definitely with fewer requests! Thank you to Josh Waltherhouse and Hannah Hart and SLIP for filling their new remote roles so well! Interpreter Appreciation Day was last Wednesday! Nurses Appreciation Day/Week was also last week - thank you to the nurses and to Nancy Possumato for sending in the additional training requests for Public School WORKS. She was excited to see that we can offer Blood Borne Pathogens online! You will be receiving more trainings soon, as well. As of Thursday morning, 140/248 staff were completely finished with their assigned trainings! Also, you will receive a reminder email when 80% of your allotted time frame has elapsed. You will also receive late notices, if necessary.

Thursday morning the Residential Staff had an all-staff Zoom meeting, and Thursday afternoon, from 1-3pm, Deans Ennis-Blahut and Halik attended a virtual meeting sponsored by CEASD focused on Student Life issues during the COVID19 crisis. Here is a summary from their experience:

"Dean Halik, Dean Ennis Blahut, and Dean Boersma joined a zoom meeting on Thursday with approximately 45 deans/residential directors from other deaf schools across the country. This was hosted by Deb Skjeveland, Director of Student Life at Model Secondary School for the Deaf and Wilmonda McDevitt, Director of Student Life at Texas School for the Deaf. Wilmonda was also a Dean of Girls for several years at WPSD before moving to Texas. We shared concerns about students and staff staying at home. We are in great shape technology wise. Everyone is able to connect with the students and parents on weekly basis. Most schools say their students miss the residential life because of friends, activities and communication. We talked about how everyone managed to pack the student's belongings and had parents come pick them up. Several schools talked about ways to keep in touch with students by sending activities online, and activities they can do at home. A couple schools say parents asked to reduce screen time."

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From the Academic Team

This past week has been Staff Appreciation Week. Although we are not able to be together at this time to celebrate the hard work that you all do, we do want to express our sincere thank you for the time and work that you put in for all of our students, families, and each other. This has been especially true during these past six weeks of distance learning.

These past six weeks have highlighted the profound impact that our organization has on so many of our students and their families. It is clearer than ever that you are so much more than "just" a teacher, aide, counselor, therapist, nurse, or security officer and that WPSD is so much more than "just" a school. You all become a second family and WPSD becomes a second home to many of our students. You don't just provide the students with the academic knowledge they need to be successful. You provide them with the social, emotional, and behavioral skills to get along with one another. You provide them with the skills to problem solve. You provide them with the language to communicate their wants and needs. You provide them with a positive role model to look up to. You provide them with a model for compassion and acceptance of others. You provide them with a shoulder to lean on as they process through grief. You provide them with the safety and security they need to focus on their education.

Working at a school is a tall order, but each and every day you step up and meet that challenge. Thank you for all that you do. Never forget how much we appreciate what you do to support our students and to make WPSD the amazing place that it is. We hope that you are able to take time over these two long weekends in May to rest and recharge your batteries. Take these opportunities to focus on yourselves, your families, and your friends. Pat yourselves on the back, look yourselves in the mirror, and say it... you ARE a superhero!

From the CECO's Corner (continued from left)

"Parents would like their children to use screen time only for education, then get off the computer and spend time with family. The hosts will share our concerns and ideas to further support our staff and students in this time of crisis. Looking forward to sharing with our residential supervisors what we learned from the Zoom meeting."

Finally, another thank you to Dr. Farmer and HR for everything from Staff Appreciation Week - it was appreciated! The "shop local" idea was especially timely and brilliant!

---Marybeth Lauderdale

**From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments:
Update of Personal and Beneficiary Information, Etc.:**

Please make sure the HR Department has your correct address and any other personal information on file in the Human Resources Department. In addition, if you would like to update your beneficiary information, please reach out to any member of the HR Team to provide you with the documentation needed to make any updates, changes, etc. It is very important that this information is current.

If you need assistance enrolling or logging into ADP, please reach out to Barb Hancock at bhancock@wpsd.org to obtain assistance.

FSA:

Reminder: All staff enrolled in the FSA program, please remember that part of the [CARES Act](#) (COVID-3 Stimulus Bill), permits the coverage for Over-the-Counter (OTC) medications and drugs for reimbursement from our FSAs accounts. **These items can be purchased with funds from eligible accounts without needing a prescription.** If you have any questions regarding this new "temporary" addition to our FSA Account, please do not hesitate to contact Dori Bachar and she can assist with questions or reimbursements.

Employee Assistance Program:

Please know that EAP Program, Back on Track, is available to any staff member who needs assistance or has concerns with problems at work or at home that are affecting their daily lives, especially in these uncertain times.

As you may remember, the program provides a confidential helpline (1-800-566-5933). EAP staff are available to listen and provide you with information. You can also learn more about the Back on Track EAP by reviewing the website at www.backontrackeap.com. Through the website, you can access an abundance of information on topics such as balancing work and family, eldercare, parenting, budgeting, mental health, and alcohol/drug dependency. To access the website, you will need to use the following information:

WPSD Staff

User name: w18200

Password: confidential help

SSDHHC Staff

User name: w18700

Password: confidential help

Payroll:

If you need to make any changes to your banking information for direct deposits or would like to change your W-4, please email Barb Hancock or Dori Bachar and we will want to follow up with you through a personal conversation due to the increased concerns of on-line fraud.

Employment Opportunities:

During distance learning and working remotely, we will be continuing to interview applicants for our open positions via Google Meeting or Zoom Meetings for the 2020-2021 school year.

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**From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments
(continued from left):**

In the interim, please know the following individual(s) have accepted a position upon the return of our students to classroom learning:

--Taylor Hill, part-time Audiologist at WPSD.

Our open positions are as follows:

WPSD Positions: Teacher, One-on-One Teacher's Aide position (Children's Center), Residential Supervisor, Residential Supervisor (Overnight) One-on-One, Housekeeper, summer maintenance positions - 2 Painters and 4 Laborers, and Substitute Positions: Teachers, Teacher's Aide, and Security.

SSDHHC Positions: Substitute positions: Teacher, Teacher's Aide, Nurse and Security.

Hershey Positions: Part-time SLP

**Reminder: Any employees interested in applying for a posted position should complete an internal application, signed by their immediate supervisor, attach an updated resume/application, and forward to the Human Resources Department.

---Dori Bachar

From the Department of Institutional Advancement

Evening in Edgewood: The Department remains hopeful that we will be able to gather together for An Evening In Edgewood on Friday, June 12th at the Edgewood Club. With the warmer weather in June, we will be able to open the doors to the outdoor patio and enjoy the entire area of the club for the event. A big "Thank You" to everyone who has purchased sponsorships and tickets or provided an in-kind donation to the event. Tickets and sponsorships are still on sale and can be purchased at wpsd.org.

COVID-19 resources: We have added a coronavirus resource page to the WPSD and Scranton websites. The page can be found under the "Academics" tab on the main menu and next to the "Continuity of Education Plan" on the drop down menu. If you have encountered a helpful resource for students, parents, or staff, please email it to Matt Campion at mcampion@wpsd.org to have it added to the page. Feel free to share any of the links on the page with those who may benefit from the materials.

E-newsletter subscription: On the WPSD and Scranton School home pages, visitors have the option to subscribe to an electronic newsletter for each school. The software collecting and managing the names of those who subscribe has recently been upgraded and improved. If you are interested in joining the distribution list visit the home page for either school, click the 'subscribe' button and complete the short form. Staff emails will not be automatically added to the distribution list. In addition, feel free to enroll friends and family members who may be interested in receiving news and events from our schools.

---Matt Campion